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A STUDY OF
PAUL TILLICH'S ANALYSIS OF
REASON AND REVELATION

Presented to
the Faculty of the Episcopal Theological School
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I.

INTRODUCTION

Pilate said to him, "So you are a King?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a King. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." John 18:37

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. John 16:13

"The question of truth is universally human; but like everything human it was first manifest on a special place in a special group. It was the Greek mind in which the passionate search for truth was most conspicuous; and it was the Greek world in which, and to which, the Gospel of John was written. The words, here said by Jesus, are according to ancient custom, put into His mouth by the evangelist who wanted to show the answer of Christianity to the central question of the Hellenic mind: the question of truth. The answer is also given to us, for we, too, ask the question of truth. And some of us ask it as passionately, and sometimes as desperately, as the Greeks did."¹

The search for truth is not restricted to one group; it is universal. Truth is not restricted either; and the truth once received is the answer to the search all have undertaken. God's answer in Jesus as the Christ is not restricted to a given place or a given time. It is the answer for all men in all time. The conviction that God's answer in Jesus as the

¹Tillich, Paul, "What Is Truth", The New Being, pp. 64-65.

Christ is the answer to men's search for the truth is the backbone of Paul Tillich's theology -- a theology which correlates man's questions with God's answer. In the following pages Tillich's use of the method of correlation in the problem of reason and revelation will be examined and evaluated.

I have chosen the epistemological section of Tillich's Systematic Theology because of his stature in contemporary American theology, his continental background, and a personal interest in epistemology on my part. The original plan of the thesis was to be an attempt to find a post-Kantian basis for theology. Such a thesis would require a lengthy discussion of theologies which are influenced by post-Kantian epistemologies and reasonable proof of the need to move beyond this influence before any constructive work in a new direction could be begun. Such a project is well beyond the scope of a B.D. thesis. As a thorough understanding and appreciation of Paul Tillich would be a necessary preliminary to any future work in the original area, the present study has been undertaken.

Tillich is a systematic theologian; each doctrine has an organic relationship with every other doctrine and with the total system. As no part of the system can be inconsistent with any other part, each doctrine implicitly contains the

entire system within itself. In another sense, however, each part of the system becomes fully clear only in the light of the total system.

Although the major concern of this paper is Tillich's section, "Reason and Revelation", because of the systematic nature of Tillich's theology, this section cannot be studied without some reference to the total system. First, if the study is to have a context, a brief examination of Tillich's understanding of the purpose, nature, and structure of systematic theology is necessary. The purpose of this introduction will be more to present and explain Tillich's understanding of the theological enterprise for the purpose of clarifying his methodology than to criticize. Second, in attempting to offer some tentative evaluation of Tillich's analysis of reason and revelation, it will be necessary to consider his analysis in the light of the total system. Finally, because Tillich has written his Systematics in such a concise manner, reference will be made to some of his essays to clarify his thought.

The Purpose of Theology

"Theology, as a function of the Church," writes Tillich, "must serve the needs of the Church."¹ For Tillich, the task

¹Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.3.

of theology is twofold. Theology must state the truth of the Christian message and it must interpret the message for the contemporary generation. The message of Christianity is the message of Jesus as the Christ; it is eternal. As the conceptualizations and situation of succeeding generations change, however, theology must reinterpret the eternal truth of the message again and again. In every interpretation theology must hold the two poles of message and interpretation in tension. The task of theology is never completed.

Tillich sees two ways a theology can err. First, it can emphasize the eternal truth of the message without regard for the situation.¹ Second, it can stress the situation without regard for the eternal truth of the message. Fundamentalism and orthodoxy are examples of theologies which err by not regarding the situation. It is true that they are eagerly embraced by many people, but they do not attempt to show how the truth of the Christian message is the answer to the questions raised by a "creative interpretation of existence."² The Church is called to spread the message, yet, if the message is unintelligible to the world, the world cannot receive it. Theology's task is to show that

¹By "situation" Tillich does not mean the predicament of the individual or a group (be it economic or sociological etc.) but the interpretation of human existence expressed in the arts, literature, science and philosophy.

²Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.4.

the Church's message is the answer to man's quest for wholeness, not to coax man to stop seeking.

According to Tillich, kerygmatic theology also runs the risk of losing contact with the situation and becoming orthodox or neo-orthodox. The greatness of Karl Barth, the foremost kerygmatic theologian today, writes Tillich, "is that he corrects himself again and again in the light of the "situation" and that he strenuously tries not to become his own follower."¹ By so doing, however, he ceases to be a purely kerygmatic theologian in Tillich's terms.

To stress the opposite pole, the situation, without regard for the message is equally dangerous. Shorn of her message, the Church has nothing to say to the world; the Church gets lost in the situation and becomes part of it. The German Christian Church during the Nazi reign is an example of a church lost in the situation.²

If theology is to fulfill its function as Tillich understands it, theology must hold to its message and still take the questions raised by the situation seriously. Theology must be both dogmatic and apologetic; it must be an answering theology, a theology which "tries to correlate the questions implied in the situation with the answers implied in the message."³ Systematics combines dogmatics and apologetics.

¹Ibid., p.5.

²Ibid., p.5.

³Ibid., p.8.

The Nature of Systematic Theology

Systematic theology like all systems of thought is decidedly circular. One cannot accept part of the system and reject the rest for the system is an integral whole which requires personal commitment for or against the whole. Systematic theology can be neither an empirical-inductive enterprise nor a metaphysical-deductive enterprise. An inductive approach requires some criterion by which the empirical evidence can be evaluated; the criterion is the expression of a commitment. A deductive approach involves a commitment, whether hidden or acknowledged, to a principle from which the system is deduced.

According to Tillich, the theologian, like the philosopher of religion, bases his system on a "mystical experience."¹ Since every part of the system is formed by the experience, "every part is dependent upon every other part."² They are organically related to each other and to the total system. Theology is a function of the Church. Therefore, the theologian, unlike the philosopher of religion, adds the "criterion of the Christian message"³ to his experience. Hence, the circle in which he operates is smaller and more concrete than that of the philosopher of religion. The

¹Ibid., p.9.

²Ibid., p.11.

³Ibid., p.9.

circle is smaller because it judges experience in the light of the message; it is more concrete because of the singular and concrete character of its basis, the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ.

As a function of the Church, theology must speak to the ultimate concern of man. Tillich defines "ultimate concern" as that concern of man "which is ultimate, unconditional, total and infinite."¹ It is that concern for which all else, even life itself, will be sacrificed. It is the "abstract translation of the great commandment."² "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately."³

That which concerns man ultimately, asserts Tillich, is that which determines our being or non-being. By "being", Tillich means more than existence, life. He means the under-girding structures which make our reality and existence possible, that by virtue of which we do exist. The specific task of theology for Tillich is then, showing how the Christian claim that in Jesus the Christ, the Logos became flesh is the answer to what concerns us ultimately. Christianity cannot prove this in a scientific fashion, but it must show how this is possible if its claim about Jesus the Christ is true and accepted.

¹Ibid., p.12

²Ibid., p.11

³Ibid., p.12.

Since theology makes a "claim that it constitutes a special realm of knowledge,"¹ the relation of theology to other forms of knowledge must be considered. In so far as the special sciences do not deal with that which concerns men ultimately, Tillich asserts that the procedures of the sciences are of no concern to theology. In like manner, the procedures and results of theology should not be of concern to the sciences. Neither should influence or prejudice the other.

The question about the relation between theology and philosophy is more difficult. According to Tillich the difficulty exists partly because there is no generally accepted definition of philosophy. Tillich suggests a definition of philosophy as "that cognitive approach to reality in which reality as such is the object."² "Reality as such" means "the structure which makes reality a whole."³ It is the structure of reality which makes the encounter of it and knowledge of it possible. Philosophy for Tillich then is the study of reality or being. Tillich's definition of philosophy is virtually a definition of ontology; and, indeed, when Tillich later defines epistemology, he defines it as the "ontology of knowing."⁴

¹Ibid., p.18.

³Ibid., p.18.

²Ibid., p.18.

⁴Ibid., p.71.

Theology, in dealing with that which concerns man ultimately and infinitely, must deal with being. If that which concerns us ultimately did not belong to being, "we could not encounter it, and it would not concern us."¹ This does not mean that the object of theology is a being among others for then it could not concern us ultimately. The object of theology is being-itself; theology and philosophy have the same object and theology must use the structures and categories of being used by philosophy. Theology must deal with ontology.

Tillich understands the difference between theology and philosophy as involving the way they deal with being-itself. "Philosophy deals with the structure of being itself; theology deals with the meaning of being for us."² From this distinction, Tillich develops areas in which theology and philosophy diverge. The first area of divergence is their respective cognitive attitude. Philosophy, seeking "detached objectivity",³ attempts to deny individuality in order to objectively grasp the structure of being. The theologian is existentially involved. He works within the theological circle to which he is committed.

The second area of divergence is their sources of knowledge. The philosopher's source of knowledge is reality

¹Ibid., p.21.

²Ibid., p.22.

³Ibid., p.22.

itself. He studies reality to "discover the structure of reality as a whole."¹ He can so direct his approach because of the assumption that there is common factor in both the structure of mind and the structure of reality. Since he can find the common logos for which he searches anywhere, the philosopher looks everywhere. Since the philosopher looks everywhere, there is no place for him to stand; he stands in pure reason.² Guided by an ultimate concern for the meaning of being, the theologian must look "where that which concerns him ultimately is manifest."³ Unlike the philosopher, he cannot look everywhere and he must stand where that which he seeks is manifested. The source of his knowledge is Jesus the Christ, the Logos become flesh. The theologian must stand within the Church.

The third area of divergence is the content of their knowledge. The content of philosophy is wisdom (*sophia*). In all its aspects, philosophy deals with the various forms which result from the structuring effect of the logos on the material in which it is actualized. That is, philosophy concerns itself with the actualized forms of the Form (*logos*). The content of theology is soteriological. It is concerned with the saving affect of the Logos become flesh.

¹Ibid., p.23.

²Ibid., p.23.

³Ibid., p.23.

Within the areas of divergence, however, there is a point of convergence. The philosopher, writes Tillich, is not completely detached. He exists and has concerns; he is involved. He, too, is driven by an ultimate concern which, though often unexpressed, gives his philosophy its "passion, seriousness, and creativity."¹ The theologian, because of his involvement and commitment is driven to communicate the meaning, significance, and universal validity of the Logos become flesh. To communicate he must be coherent. The theologian must maintain some degree of honest detachment.

Despite the convergence between theology and philosophy there can be neither a conflict nor a synthesis between them; they do not share "a common ground on which to fight."² Yet, since philosophy, in its attempts to understand the structure of reality, expresses in large part the situation to which systematics must address its message, systematic theology does take philosophy into itself.

The Method and Structure of Systematic Theology

If systematic theology is to be an answering theology, its sources must draw upon both the message and the situation;

¹Ibid., p.25.

²Ibid., p.26.

Tillich's sources do. The Bible is the original witness to Jesus as the Christ; the original reception of the revelation. Since "reception is part of the event itself"¹ for Tillich, the Bible is "both original event and original document." But the Bible is not the only source for the message. Any attempt to interpret biblical texts will be guided and influenced by what earlier generations have understood and written about them. Thus, the Church councils and church history are also sources of the message.

If systematic theology is to answer the questions raised by the situation, its sources must reflect something of the situation. Accordingly, Tillich includes the history of religion and culture as sources. The theologian does not invent the language he employs; he inherits it from his culture and language expresses an understanding of reality. He speaks from within a given cultural matrix to the culture. A theological study of the culture reveals the ultimate concern of the culture which lies behind "a philosophy, a political system, an artistic style, a set of ethics or social principles."² From such a study, theology gains the necessary understanding of the situation.

¹Ibid., p.35.

²Ibid., p.39.

Tillich asserts that the sources of systematics cannot serve as sources unless they are received; and they are received through experience. What is the role of experience in systematic theology? Is it a source along side the message and the situation? If experience is an independent source, the theologian works "in a circle whose periphery is extendable and whose center is changeable."^{*} But, as noted earlier, for the Christian theologian the criterion of every religious experience is Jesus as the Christ. Experience is not a source. "The event is given to experience, and not derived from it."¹ Experience is the medium through which the sources are received and as a medium it will color the event somewhat.

If systematic theology is to be an answering theology, the selection of the criterion (the norm) by which the sources of theology are used must reflect this. The sources do not interpret themselves. The norm of theology is that which guides the use and interpretation of the sources. To clarify the nature and role of the norm, Tillich offers an example.² Luther's formal norm was the authority of scripture; his material norm, through which the canon was determined and scripture was interpreted, was "justification through faith."³

¹Ibid., p.46.

²Ibid., p.47.

³Ibid., p.47.

*Ibid., p.45.

The norm cannot be chosen, debated, or discussed; it is thrust upon the theologian by the situation and the expression of the norm reflects theology's understanding of the situation.

What Tillich is saying is simply that one comes to the message with certain questions which arise from one's existential situation. The interaction between the message and the situation produces the material norm. Luther's norm was the result of reading scripture in the light of the Church's attempt to mediate grace through a hierarchical and sacramental system. Reading scripture in this light and opposing the Church's stand on indulgences, Luther was drawn to the Pauline statements about justification through faith. "Justification through faith" was the answer to the situation.

Tillich sees the situation of contemporary man as revolving about the "meaninglessness and despair in all realms of life,"¹ and the search for meaning, wholeness, and hope. Tillich terms that reality in which meaning, wholeness, and hope are given, the "New Being" manifested in Jesus the Christ. The New Being in Jesus the Christ is Tillich's material norm.

If systematic theology is to be an answering theology which interprets the Christian message for the contemporary generation, its interpretation must be understandable by the

¹Ibid., p.49.

generation. For Tillich this means that systematic theology must have a rational character. The theologian, however, is committed to a concrete manifestation of the Logos made flesh, not the universal logos; he speaks from within the Church, not common rationality.¹ The question is what is the extent and meaning of the rational character of systematic theology.

Tillich distinguishes two types of reason: (1) ecstatic reason; and (2) formal or technical reason. "Ecstatic reason is reason grasped by an ultimate concern;"² that through which one who has faith receives the contents of the faith. Formal reason³ appears to be the capacity to think rationally and to express ideas methodologically. All who have faith have been grasped by the ultimate concern and participation in ecstatic reason. The theologian, however, must also express the truth of the message "in a methodical way."⁴ The message is "received by ecstatic reason and conceived through technical reason."⁵ Within life neither ecstatic reason nor technical reason are completely unobtrusive in the performance of their tasks. There is interplay between them which results in ambiguity.

¹Ibid., p.24.

²Ibid., p.53.

³Although Tillich does not define "technical reason" here he does later, p.73.

⁴Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.53.

⁵Ibid., p.54.

Although his complete discussion of the problem of reason is the subject of the next section, Tillich does enumerate three principles which can state in a preliminary fashion the rational character of systematic theology. First, the theologian must be careful in his use of terminology, especially theological terminology. Many words used in theology have connotations which differ from their use in ordinary language. Theology does not have to abandon these words, but it must explain each word's use in theology and then employ it in a consistent manner. Further, theology must avoid words which could confuse the discussion because of anti-Christian nuances. Theology must be semantically rational.

Second, theology must be logically rational. By "logically rational", Tillich means what is ordinarily conveyed by the admonition, "be reasonable", or "don't be so irrational." Theology must make sense if it is to be understood by those to whom it is addressed; it must obey the rules of logic. This does not mean, however, that logic controls theology. Theology is dialectical and, as dialectics "follows the movement of thought or the movement of reality through yes and no, but describes it in logically correct terms",¹ so theology strives to express its message in a rational expression even

¹Ibid., p.56.

though its subject transcends the limits of finite reason. Because of its attempt at logical rationality, theology turns to paradox, writes Tillich.

"Paradox points to the fact that in God's acting finite reason is superceded but not annihilated; it expresses this fact in terms which are not logically contradictory but which are supposed to point beyond the realm in which finite reason is applicable."¹

According to Tillich, Christianity contains only one real paradox, "the appearance of that which conquers existence under the condition of existence,"² the appearance of the Logos made flesh. All other paradoxes are contained in this paradox.

Finally, systematic theology must be methodologically rational. A system of thought requires a consistent method of approaching the material.

Tillich's method is the method of correlation. This method is implied in his definition of systematic theology as an answering theology. If systematic theology is to interpret the Christian message for the contemporary generation, it must correlate what it has to say with the questions raised by the situation. It does not answer unasked questions. The method of correlation is a tool for correlating the

¹Ibid., p.57.

²Ibid., p.57.

questions and the answers given by the message. However, Tillich adds, like any tool, the method of correlation is not an "indifferent net",¹ but a part of reality and, as such, influences the system.

Tillich writes that the word "correlation" can have three meanings which are applicable to systematic theology. First, it can mean "the correspondence of different series of data, as in statistical charts."² This type of correspondence exists between "religious symbols and that which is symbolized by them."³ Second, it can mean the "logical interdependence of concepts."⁴ There is a logical interdependence between concepts of humanity and of the divine. Our concepts of man and God are interrelated; what we say about one says something about the other. Finally, there is "the real interdependence of things or events in structural wholes." Man's ultimate concern is his being or non-being; "God", for Tillich, is a religious symbol for the ground of being. Man's ultimate concern and God correspond.

Given Tillich's designation of "God" as the ground of all being in which all that is (has being) participates, it

¹Ibid., p.60.

²Ibid., p.60.

³Ibid., p.60. It appears to me that Tillich wants to say something stronger about symbols than this, but it is at least this.

⁴Ibid., p.60.

would appear that the first two meanings of "correlation" in theology grow out of the third. It is because all that is participates in being-itself that there is a special correlation between symbols and that which they symbolize. Indeed, Tillich defines "symbol" in essentially this way when he states that symbols not only point to that which they symbolize but participate in their reality also.

Because of the real interdependence between concepts (a common ground), God's answers answer man's question. "Symbolically speaking, God answers Man's questions, and, under the impact of God's answers man asks them."¹ Within this real interdependence of correlation, the answer cannot be separated from the question nor the question from the answer. Man's question, writes Tillich, is himself, his being or non-being. The answer is the power of being in which all being is grounded. The question and answer are united because of the structure out of which they both arise.

For the purpose of presentation, systematic theology, through the method of correlation, separates the question and answer. First, systematic theology analyzes the human situation out of which the existential questions arise using the tools of philosophy and the theology of culture. Then,

¹Ibid., p.61.

using symbols drawn from its sources through its material norm, systematic theology attempts to demonstrate that the Christian message is the answer to these questions.

II.

TILLICH'S ANALYSIS OF REASON

Systematic theology is an answering theology correlating the questions raised by an analysis of the situation with the answers given by the Christian message. The first half of the method of correlation in the epistemological section of Tillich's systematics is, therefore, an analysis of reason.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge, or as Tillich writes, "the knowledge of knowing."¹ As a branch of the philosophical curriculum, epistemology is concerned with the question: what is knowledge and how do we obtain it? What is the relationship between the knower and the known? All these questions imply some understanding of the nature of reality for "knowing is an event within the totality of events,"² within the totality of reality. That is, everything which is (and this would include everything which can be known) participates in reality. Hence, discussion about knowledge implies an understanding of reality.

In this chapter, two of Tillich's epistemological writings will be presented and analyzed, "Kairos and Logos" from

¹Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.71.

²Ibid., p.71.

Interpretation of History, and "Reason and the Quest for Revelation" from his Systematic Theology, Vol. I. "Kairos and Logos" is an early work by Tillich written in 1926. I have chosen to include this early study of epistemology for two reasons. First, it will help clarify Tillich's thought in the systematics which is often so concise as to be unclear, and, second, because it is an early study, it will show the consistency of Tillich's thought over the years.

Kairos and Logos

In "Kairos and Logos", Tillich considers the relationship between the perceiving subject and reality, "for in this question the possible antithesis of Kairos and Logos is clearly expressed."¹ "Kairos" designates the time which is at once creative and decisive. Contrasted to "chronos", chronological time, Kairos is the moment under fate and freedom. The Logos is the pure form. The question Tillich raises is what is man's attitude toward the Kairos and the Logos in knowledge? There are two attitudes man can have toward each of them: asceticism and eros. Asceticism is emptying and eros, filling. Thus Tillich's question can be

¹Tillich, Paul, "Kairos and Logos", Interpretation of History, p.130.

restated: must the knowing subject deny his peculiar historical character, empty himself of his historical fate and freedom in order to be in some absolute position in which to receive the (eternal) pure forms?

Tillich begins his presentation with a brief review of Western philosophy and divides the philosophical tradition into two streams: a mainstream (Plato, Kant) which has held that the knowing subject must empty himself of the Kairos and a smaller stream (going "back to the mysticism and nature philosophy of the Middle Ages and Renaissance")¹ which has resisted the mainstream.

To the mainstream's attitude of asceticism toward the kairos and eros towards the logos belongs the "possibility of regarding the world as a system of eternal forms".² At its extreme, by denying all that is individual and historical in the world, the mainstream recognized only that which is universal and eternal as real and significant. Tillich states that this is the attitude of pure theory. And in the realm of theoretical knowledge, the mainstream has been the dominant force.

In the realm of practical knowledge, e.g. politics, there is a tendency toward the opposite attitude: eros toward

¹Ibid., p.129.

²Ibid., p.130.

the kairos and asceticism toward the logos. This tendency is not extreme however, because even in areas of practical knowledge, thought "guided by clear consciousness and scientific insight deserves preference over the purely instinctive."¹ Tillich then questions whether "adherence to the kairos is an advantage for theory."² That is, he asks whether it is advantageous or even possible for man to deny his historical fate in the search for pure, theoretical knowledge.

The force of Tillich's discussion is that asceticism toward the kairos is possible only if the knowing subject is essentially identical with all other knowing subjects in such a way that his historical character is of no consequence. Only in so far as what it means to be a knowing subject, to be human, is defined in such a way that there is no essential individuality can there be an attitude of asceticism toward the kairos. To the extent that each man is a unique historical person and to the extent that this uniqueness plays an important role in knowledge, asceticism toward the kairos is an impossibility.

Tillich writes that "Greek civilization with its tendency toward the eternal forms of nature . . ." and "the Middle

¹Ibid., p.131.

²Ibid., p.131.

Ages with their tendency toward the eternal forms of revelation"¹ both assumed the possibility (or tended toward this assumption) of a perceiving subject void of qualitative time, i.e. *akairos*. The Greeks saw time as accidental. For Catholic Christianity, revelation, which alone makes super-nature available, eliminates individuality in thought. By different means both had satisfied the question of the knowing subject and both had denied the historical individuality of the knowing subject.

"The question of the knowing subject became more serious only when historical thinking perpetrated into the sphere of super-nature through Protestantism, and into the sphere of nature through humanism."² No longer was the individuality of man seen as an accidental or insignificant passing of time but as a "fateful history."³ Although Protestantism and humanism both have a "new affirmative attitude toward nature", Protestantism "realizes the deep contradictions in nature."⁴ Yet, Protestant man cannot flee to super-nature; he must remain in nature.

¹Ibid., p.132.

²Ibid., p.131.

³Ibid., p.131.

⁴Ibid., p.134.

"Here the subject has no possibility of an absolute position. It cannot go out of the sphere of decision. Every part of its nature is affected by the contradictions. Fate and freedom reach into the act of knowledge and make it an historical deed: the *kairos* determines the *logos*.¹"

Protestantism sees separation from the Unconditioned (God) as placing man within a sphere of cleavage and contradiction. Man cannot flee this contradiction; it is rooted in his very existence. Protestant man cannot affirm nature fully because he cannot affirm anything fully.

Any attempt to achieve an absolute position is open to attack by the religious attitude which is aware of "standing in separation from the Unconditioned."² Thus, while the classical-humanistic conception of knowledge is rational and static, and while the medieval-Catholic conception is superrational and static, the Protestant conception with its lack of an absolute position must be "dynamic and irrational."³

How then can there be any knowledge? Without any possibility of an absolute position can there be any element in knowledge which is universally valid? According to Tillich, the element of universality in knowledge is realized in the concrete decision for the Unconditioned. Thus, "all knowledge

¹Ibid., pp.134-5.

²Ibid., p.135.

³Ibid., p.135.

of the truth in a certain stratum is knowledge about God."¹

How is this decision for the Unconditioned carried out? What elements or factors are necessary for such a decision? Although he writes that "decisions are made by the Ego",² Tillich does not define exactly what he means by the Ego. Apparently, the Ego can be identified with the "structure of personality."³ From this identification, the Ego would appear to be that which undergirds our being as personal and because of which we are persons. When he writes that "in so far as it decides" ... the Ego ... "cannot itself be subjected to decisions"⁴ Tillich means that what determines us as historical personalities is not affected by any decision, i.e. man does not cease to be historical because of any decision. The unchanging Ego or structure of personality is the first prerequisite for knowledge.

The second prerequisite of decision is the world, the material in which the decision is carried out. Real, foreign, given, the world stands confronting the Ego.

The third necessary element of knowledge is the "meaningful interpretation of reality."⁵ The interpretation necessitates decision; reality does not interpret itself. This decision

¹Ibid., p.141.

²Ibid., p.142.

³Ibid., p.142.

⁴Ibid., p.142.

⁵Ibid., p.143.

is neither intellectual nor moral, but "lies in the deeper stratum upon which both of these rest."¹ The decision is "the attitude toward the Unconditioned, an attitude which is freedom and fate at the same time."² From this element of knowledge, decision, knowledge receives its position within the *kairos*.

Tillich defends the necessity of decision in knowledge, the meaningful interpretation of reality, on the basis of a correspondence between the elements of knowledge and reality. The elements of knowledge are the unchanging Ego, the material in which the decision is made (the world), and the meaningful interpretation of reality. Although Tillich's presentation is not clear, it would appear that he sees a (possible) correspondence between the unchanging Ego and the pure form (*logos*) and between the given world and pure material.³

The third element in knowledge is decision. There is, as noted earlier, a decision for the Unconditioned and the decision is ambiguous for, like every decision, it is never final. The idea of decision implies the concept of freedom

¹Ibid., p.144. By decision, Tillich apparently means an existential affirmation about God, man, and the relation between them.

²Ibid., p.145.

³Ibid., p.156. Tillich writes here, "The third stratum in knowledge beside the pure form and pure material, the qualitatively changeable, actually historical stratum is to be interpreted not only from the point of view of knowledge, but from reality as well." Can we not assume a similar correspondence between knowledge and reality in the first and second strata?

and it is in this concept of freedom that the "root of individuality"¹ gained its meaning. To deny the possibility of an absolute subject is not to fall into subjectivity, but to gain individuality. "Subjectivity is a pre-historical category. The historical categories are freedom and fate."² Freedom and fate "are one in every event which constitutes history."³

The decision of the knowing subject is free in so far as it is not mechanically necessary and fate in so far as it is not arbitrary. The categories of fate and freedom are together, an element of reality, that element of reality which makes man historical and which issues forth in decision. There is a correspondence between the third element of knowledge and this element of reality.

"In the third level of knowledge therefore the fatefulness of reality and the depth of life are effective."⁴

Thus far Tillich has presented a concept of reality at once static and dynamic. Tillich uses the sidestream of the philosophical tradition here represented by Jakob Böhme to explain the tension. Within the world of ideas, Böhme recognized a tension and a polarity which will be resolved

¹Ibid., p.156.

³Ibid., p.157.

²Ibid., p.157.

⁴Ibid., p.158.

only in eternity. The idea itself is dynamic; it is that which creates history.

Tillich sees Böhme's work pointing to the idea as more than the "immutable element in being",¹ but also as a "power which can enter into conflict with itself."² Tillich thus maintains not only what Plato recognized (the immutable element without which the idea would not be an idea) but also the dynamic element recognized by Böhme.

"This means, however, that there can be no comprehension of the essential nature of things except in decision, because the nature of things itself stands in fate and ambiguity."³

That the idea is dynamic means for Tillich that the idea can be understood only through dialectics. Dialectics is more than "the art of determining the relation of ideas to one another and to existence."⁴ In so far as the idea, the essence is under fate, dialectics must be seen as the "observation of the essence,"⁵ i.e. of the relation of the idea to itself and within itself.

The idea stands under fate; knowledge cannot be a flight from history. To know is to know within history, within decision. Knowledge is within history not only because of man's historical character, but because of the nature of things

¹Ibid., p.159.

⁴Ibid., p.164.

²Ibid., p.160.

⁵Ibid., p.169.

³Ibid., p.160.

themselves; not only because of the knowing subject but also because of the known object. "The unity of kairos and logos is realized."¹

If the doctrine of knowledge presented above were to be seen as part of knowledge itself, it would be open to the charge of self-contradiction for then, as Tillich states, a part of knowledge would exist which unequivocally and unambiguously states the ambiguity of knowledge. But, according to Tillich, the doctrine of knowledge belongs to a sphere separate from knowledge. The doctrine of knowledge is an attitude toward the Unconditioned and expresses the relationship between knowledge and the Unconditioned. It is the expression of a basic metaphysical attitude.

Drawing from both streams of western philosophical thought, Tillich has fashioned a doctrine of knowledge in which the Protestant "principle of justification through faith is applied to the question of truth, namely that within the context of existence a visible realization of the holy is not possible, that all existence remains ambiguous with respect to the Unconditioned."² His concept of knowledge recognizes the significance the Protestant view of man must have for any Protestant epistemology.

¹Ibid., p.169.

²Ibid., p.172.

The Systematic Theology

The Structure of Reason

Tillich begins his analysis of reason in the Systematics by distinguishing between two concepts of reason: ontological and technical. The former is "the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and to transform reality;"¹ the latter is "the capacity for reasoning."²

The concept of ontological reason has dominated the classical tradition of philosophy. As such, ontological reason is not differentiated qualitatively or quantitatively among men; it does not determine the measure of one's intelligence. Being that structure of the mind by which the mind can deal with or relate to reality, ontological reason is the *sine qua non* of intelligence, but not the capacity for reasoning itself.³ Thus, the "ontological concept of reason always is accompanied ... by the technical concept of reason."⁴

Technical reason is the power of reasoning, the logical and methodological tools of reason. Although it is capable of collecting data and of reasoning, technical reason cannot, in the terminology of "Kairos and Logos," supply the "meaningful

¹Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.72.

²Ibid., p.72-3.

³This structure of the mind can be seen as the logos character of the mind.

⁴Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.72.

interpretation of reality." As a tool of reason, technical reason must remain the servant of reason, if it is to avoid the demonic results which occur when technical reason replaces ontological reason.

Tillich holds that theology must make use of both concepts of reason. In keeping with the demand for semantic and logical reationality, theology must make use of the methods of technical reason. If theology is to speak to every generation, it must be reasonable and consistent. But Tillich also asserts that theology must neither confuse the two concepts of reason nor abandon the concept of ontological reason. God is not part of a means-ends relationship; he cannot be contained within the limits of technical reason.

That the mind can grasp and shape reality (ontological reason) must mean that "reality itself has a logos character."¹ Tillich presents four main schools of thought which have attempted to explain how the logos character of the mind and the logos character of reality are related. They are realism, idealism, dualism and monism.

Realism considers the logos character of the mind to be a product of the logos character of reality. Idealism

¹ Ibid., p.75.

sees the logos character of the mind producing the logos character of reality. Dualism "affirms the ontological independence and functional interdependence"¹ of them, but fails to recognize any underlying unity. Monism recognizes the underlying unity but at the cost of recognizing the difference between them. While Tillich does not hold that theologians must pass judgments on the four schools, he does hold that the theologian must acknowledge their common presupposition that both mind and reality have a logos character.

Tillich terms the logos character of the mind "subjective reason" and defines it as "the structure of the mind which enables it to grasp and shape reality on the basis of a corresponding structure of reality (in whatever way this correspondence may be explained)."² Subjective reason is ontological reason "actualized in an individual self."³

"Subjective reason" appears to correspond to what Tillich termed "the structure of personality" in "Kairos and Logos." Both subjective reason and the structure of personality are actualized in an individual self, "rest within the security of the logos,"⁴ and are what enables the mind to deal with reality.

¹Ibid., p.75.

²Ibid., p.76.

³Ibid., p.76.

⁴Tillich, Paul, "Kairos and Logos", p.142.

Tillich terms the logos character of reality "objective reason", the "rational structure of reality which the mind can grasp and according to which it can shape reality."¹ Objective reason can be understood as that structure of reality which makes it "graspable", as that quality of the reality which permits the mind to relate with it. Objective reason, however, is that which prohibits subjective reason from creating its own world out of "wholecloth." In grasping and shaping reality, the mind must do so in accord with objective reason. Thus, "reason in the philosopher grasps the reason in nature."²

Objective reason appears to correspond to the second element of knowledge (material) discussed in "Kairos and Logos." Both objective reason and the second element of knowledge confront the knower as real, foreign, and given; both are what the mind must grasp.

Within both objective and subjective reason, dynamic and static elements are united. The dynamic element is not the result of man's existential distortion (separation from the Unconditioned), but an expression of the dialectical nature of the idea discussed in "Kairos and Logos." That the dynamic element of reason is confused with the existential

¹Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.77.

²Ibid., p.77.

distortion of reason is, writes Tillich, an unfortunate result of insufficient clarity in the analysis of reason. Error may be the failure to recognize the dynamic element of reason as such as well as the failure to grasp reality. In Tillich's analysis, there are then, three elements of reason: the static, the dynamic, and the "existential distortion of both of them."¹

In discussing the meaning of the dynamic element of objective reason, Tillich writes that it is because of this element that reality can "create possibilities within itself".² Further, reality can actualize itself only in accord with objective reason. Tillich is here claiming that the "real is rational and the rational is real" (Hegel). Despite the seemingly tautological character of this statement, it is not a tautology but an affirmation about the character of being. Being makes sense; that which is real is not absurd.

Having discussed the elements of reason, Tillich proceeds to consider that which is "not reason but which precedes reason and is manifest through it,"³ the depth of reason. The depth of reason transcends reason, is not part of either objective or subjective reason, yet is "expressed through every rational expression."⁴ Not being a part of reason,

¹Ibid., p.78.

²Ibid., p.78.

³Ibid., p.79.

⁴Ibid., p.79.

the depth of reason cannot be "known" in the usual sense of the word. Through its manifestation in every rational expression, the depth of reason is expressable in myth. The very term, "depth of reason", is metaphorical and points to its character of being outside the "field of reason"¹ despite its reality in all reason.

"It could be called the "substance" which appears in the rational structure, or "being-itself" which is manifest in the logos of being, or the ground which is creative in every rational creation, or the abyss which cannot be exhausted by any creation or by any totality of them, or the "infinite potentiality of being and meaning" which pours into the rational structures of the mind and reality, actualizing and transforming them."²

Tillich's use of the concept, the depth of reason, in the Systematics can be clarified by a consideration of his presentation in "Kairos and Logos." The third element or prerequisite of knowledge, 'the meaningful interpretation of reality, requires decision. This decision, which is neither moral nor intellectual but "lies in the deeper stratum upon which both of these rest,"³ is the expression of the "attitude toward the Unconditioned."⁴ It is an affirmation about man's relation to the Unconditioned.

¹Ibid., p.79.

²Ibid., p.79.

³Tillich, "Kairos and Logos", p.144.

⁴Ibid., p.145.

The relation between the concept of decision and the concept of the depth of reason can be seen as the relation between a verb and a noun which have the same root. The word "decision" points to that action which is the direct expression of the "deeper stratum". Decision, in Tillich's special sense of the word, is the particular action in which the deeper stratum issues forth and expresses itself. The phrase "depth of reason" metaphorically describes the deeper stratum in "noun terms". It describes that which points to being-itself in the decision toward the Unconditioned.

The reason for the difficulty or lack of clarity of Tillich's discussion of the depth of reason in the Systematics as compared to his earlier work is his strict adherence to the method of correlation. The first half of the method of correlation is the analysis of the situation and it must be carried on without reference to theological concepts (the Unconditioned which is another term for God). While he could discuss the "decision" in theological terms in "Kairos and Logos", in the Systematics he cannot.

Tillich attempts to clarify the metaphorical description of the depth of reason by applying the term to "the various fields in which reason is actualized."¹ Within the cognitive

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.79.

realm field, the depth of reason is the "quality of pointing to truth-itself;"¹ within the aesthetic realm, beauty-itself; within the legal realm, justice-itself; and within the communal realm, love-itself. It would appear that as all these realms participate in being-itself, the recognition of truth-itself, beauty-itself, justice-itself, and love-itself would be formed by the decision toward the Unconditioned. In all these realms, the "pointing" is realized through a decision.

The depth of reason appears in both the objective and subjective structures of reality. While it is obscured under the conditions of existence, it is not destroyed by the Fall. In this sense, it is similar to the structure of the Ego from which the decision issues in "Kairos and Logos". The definite shift in terminology is necessitated by the fact that in "Kairos and Logos" Tillich restricted his discussion primarily to subjective reason while in the Systematics he discusses both subjective and objective reason.

At this point in his argument, Tillich is closest to a Platonic view. But where Platonism saw the static element only at the loss of the dynamic, Tillich holds the two elements in tension. Further, while Platonism aspired to an attitude

¹Ibid., p.79.

of asceticism toward the kairos, Tillich does not. Thus, while Platonism held that the mind grasped the idea, Tillich writes that the depth of reason points to the idea.

Reason in Existence

"Reason as the structure of the mind and reality is actual in the process of being, existence, and life. Being is finite, existence is self-contradictory, and life is ambiguous. Actual reason participates in these characteristics of reality."¹

According to Tillich, the limitation of reason is neither accidental nor methodological. Actual reason, reason actualized in subjective or objective reason, participates in finitude, self-contradiction, and ambiguity and it is from within these limitations that reason points beyond itself to the logos. Reason, obscured under the limitations of existence points to the unambiguous forms.

Tillich presents two classical descriptions of the finitude of knowledge, Cusanus (a Catholic) and Kant (a Protestant). Cusanus acknowledged the inability of finite reason to grasp its infinite ground; the finite cannot grasp the infinite. However, through his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites, Cusanus asserted that the acknowledgement of reason's inability to grasp its infinite ground results

¹ Ibid., p.81.

in an awareness of the infinite. This awareness is real knowledge.

Tillich interprets Kant's categories to be a doctrine of "human finitude."¹ To be finite is to be temporal. Reason, being finite is also temporal and "cannot break through the limits of temporality and reach the eternal."² Kant, like Cusanus discovers the frontier of reason, but it is a frontier beyond which reason attempts to move. The attempts by post-Kantian metaphysicians to move beyond the frontier of reason contributed, in Tillich's view, to the attempt of post-Kantian epistemologists to exclude metaphysics from all discussions and to the contemporary disregard for ontological reason and enthronement of technical reason.

The self-contradiction of reason under the conditions of existence does not destroy reason; the destruction of reason, in Tillich's terms, would mean the destruction of reality. Nevertheless, the attempt by the elements of reason to deny the other elements of reason results in an overemphasis of a particular element at the expense of other, equally necessary elements. Reason is distorted. As "finitude is essential"³ to reason actualized in being, so self-contradiction is essential to reason which is actualized in existence. The

¹Ibid., p.82.

²Ibid., p.82.

³Ibid., p.81.

self-contradiction of actual reason cannot be solved by reason itself. To this extent the theological criticism of reason is well founded. But, Tillich adds, the attack on reason should never be aimed at reason per se.

In "Kairos and Logos", Tillich expressed what he means by the "self-contradiction of reason under the conditions of existence" in terms of "standing in separation from the Unconditioned and in the sphere of cleavage."¹ In both cases what Tillich means is sin. Reason under the conditions of sin is distorted.² His shift in terminology results partially from his adherence to the method of correlation (the analysis of the situation does not employ theological language) and partially from his desire to produce a Systematics which, aimed at educated people for whom traditional theological language is no longer relevant, utilizes new language.

Tillich writes that when the structures of reason, both objective and subjective, "are affirmed and actualized without regarding the depth of reason,"³ the result is autonomy. Autonomy (self-law) is not license, but obedience to the logos structure of the mind and reality. Autonomous

¹Tillich, "Kairos and Logos", p.136.

²Tillich's doctrine of the self-contradiction of reason under the conditions of existence is similar to Calvin's doctrine of total depravity, only in modern terms. Calvin's doctrine did not mean that man was totally depraved in every aspect of his being but that every aspect of man's being (his totality) was tainted by sin (depraved). So with Tillich.

³Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.83.

reason shapes the reality it confronts according to its own structures. Resisting "the danger of being conditioned by the situation of the self and the world," autonomous reason frees itself from whatever cannot be grasped and shaped according to its own structures. What Tillich termed the "mainstream" of western philosophy in "Kairos and Logos" tends to autonomy.¹ In its adherence to the structures, autonomous reason maintains an attitude of eros toward the logos and in its attempt to be free from "the situation of the self and the world,"² it maintains an attitude of asceticism toward the kairos. When autonomy completely disregards its depth, when the structures of reason deny the depth of reason, autonomy becomes "empty and powerless."³

As the conflict between the structures of reason and the depth of reason can result in an autonomous reason, so can it produce a heteronomous reason which affirms the depth of reason without regarding the structures of reason. Claiming in every moment to speak in the name of the ground of being, heteronomy rejects the methodological approach of autonomy; it claims to speak "in an unconditional and ultimate

¹The "mainstream" tends to autonomy in its attitude of eros toward the Logos structure of reality and its acceptance of a methodological approach. The great examples of the mainstream (Plato, Kant) had not, however, lost the depth of reason.

²Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.84.

³Ibid., p.85.

way"¹ in the moment. Heteronomy has, therefore, an attitude of eros toward the kairos and of asceticism toward the logos.

The polarity between the depth of reason and the structures of reason is a conflict within reason itself and, as Tillich writes, is both "dangerous and tragic."² Autonomy without its depth has no real content; it is sterile. Without the structures of reason, the depth of reason has no form; it is demonic. Both autonomy and heteronomy have their roots in theonomy, "autonomous reason united with its own depth."³ But a complete theonomy is not possible within existence for the "elements which are essentially united in it struggle with each other under the conditions of existence and try to destroy each other."⁴

Tillich asserts that "historically, autonomous reason has liberated and maintained itself in a never ending fight with heteronomy."⁵ Presenting a short history of western thought, he also states then an understanding of the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy "is the key to any theological understanding of the Greeks as well as of the modern development and of many other problems of the spiritual history of mankind."⁶ It may be that Tillich is correct in both claims, but his discussion is so schematic that it lacks the necessary clarity and comprehensiveness to be convincing.

¹Ibid., p.84.

⁴Ibid., p.85.

²Ibid., p.84.

⁵Ibid., p.84.

³Ibid., p.85.

⁶Ibid., p.85.

Tillich's essay "Kairos" in The Protestant Era, provides a more comprehensive discussion of theonomy, autonomy, and heteronomy. In this essay, Tillich begins by defining theonomy,¹ as that state of being open "to the presence of the unconditional."² Theonomy does not refer to god given laws, but to the fact that the "consciousness of the presence of the unconditional permeates and guides all cultural functions and laws."³ In such cultures the purpose of analyzing or knowing things is not to gain control over them, but to discover "their divine significance."⁴

Theonomy is destroyed by autonomy which seeks to replace "mystical nature with rational nature."⁵ Autonomy seeks knowledge for the purpose of controlling the known, for the purpose of shaping reality in accord with the logos.

In "Kairos" then, autonomy does not arise from a struggle with heteronomy, as in the Systematics, but from theonomy itself. In this essay, heteronomy is seen as a false theonomy which attempts to destroy the vitality of autonomy; heteronomy arises from a struggle with autonomy. The contrast between the two major poles (autonomy and theonomy) is not

¹In "Kairos", as in "Kairos and Logos", Tillich is not restricted from theological approach by the method of correlation as he is in his analysis of reason in the Systematics. Hence, he can begin with a full discussion of that which is logically prior, theonomy.

²Tillich, Paul, "Kairos", The Protestant Era, p.43.

³Ibid., p.43. ⁴Ibid., p.44. ⁵Ibid., p.44.

so extreme; autonomy is not necessarily a complete denial of the depth of reason and a "new theonomy is not the negation of autonomy."¹

In "Kairos," several aspects of Tillich's thought become clearer. Autonomy is the ill-fated attempt to obey the structures of reason. It is ill-fated because autonomy can be vital only as long as it continues to draw upon a past theonomy. Yet autonomy is driven to replacing "mystical nature with rational nature."² Once it has succeeded, autonomy has lost the source from which it must draw its vitality; it becomes shallow and sterile.

Heteronomy is the attempt to combat the sterility of a shallow autonomy, to obtain the meaningfulness autonomy lacks by imposing an (alien) law in the name of the ground of being. But the depth of reason cannot be grasped; it is received. Heteronomy cannot succeed in supplying autonomy with its lost depth. The sterility of autonomy can be solved only by a new theonomy which appears in a new kairos.³ As Tillich writes in the Systematics, reason needs a revelation.

In actual reason the static and dynamic elements, which are united in essential reason oppose each other. Tillich terms this struggle the conflict between absolutism and relativism. There are two forms of absolutism, conservative

¹Ibid., p.46.

²Ibid., p.44.

³Ibid., p.46.

and revolutionary. The former attempts to defend the status quo, the latter to alter it radically; but whether conservative or revolutionary, absolutism claims to represent unchangeable truth. Both conservative and revolutionary movements act in the name of Truth.

Opposing the two forms of absolutism are two forms of relativism, positivistic or cynical. Positivistic relativism is "positive" in its acceptance of the status quo (that which is posited) in a given society, but relative in its refusal to adjudicate differences between cultures. It denies the static element in reason. According to Tillich, cynicism represents a complete disappointment and reaction to absolutism which, denying both the static and dynamic elements of reason, employs reason only in an attempt to discredit reason.

Tillich terms the attempt to solve the struggle between the static and dynamic elements by reducing the static element of reason to a pure form, "criticism."¹ Socrates and Kant are examples of critical philosophy.² Criticism cannot succeed because its assumption of empty forms is false. Further, if the form is conceived of as an empty form, it cannot be concrete. "Only that which is absolute

¹Ibid., p.88.

²Ibid., p.89.

and concrete at the same time can overcome this conflict. Only revelation can do it."¹

The final conflict within actual reason which Tillich analyzes is the struggle between the formal and emotional elements of reason. Formalism is "the exclusive emphasis on the formal side of every rational function"² to the exclusion of other elements. In its extreme form, formalism would completely separate the functions of reason into discreet, non-related functions.

In the cognitive realm, writes Tillich, formalism tries to control the known object and avoids that which can be sought after but not controlled. In the aesthetic realm, formalism is the attitude "expressed in the phrase 'art for art's sake';"³ in the legal realm formalism results in a concept of justice which has no contact with human reality.

The reaction of emotion against the sterile formalism cannot succeed. Separated from the rational structures, emotion becomes irrational and "can have great power of destruction over the mind."⁴ Reason itself cannot solve this conflict; reason needs revelation.

Tillich's discussion of the polarities within actual reason is weakened by its brevity. First, he has presented

¹Ibid., p.89.
³Ibid., p.90.

²Ibid., p.89.
⁴Ibid., p.93.

only the two poles themselves be they autonomy and heteronomy, relativism and absolutism, or formalism and emotionalism. He has not dealt with the possible gradations along the spectrum between the poles; nor with possible combinations of the poles. Is an "absolute-formalism" possible? What meaning, if any, would it have for an analysis of reason?

Second, and more important, Tillich has not drawn the dialectical relation between the poles clearly enough in the Systematics. Do autonomy and heteronomy dialectically give rise to each other? Is complete autonomy dialectically close to heteronomy as the depth of despair in Kirkegaard is dialectically closest to faith? Tillich appears close to holding this position when he writes, "heteronomy ... is usually a reaction against an autonomy which has lost its depth,"¹ i.e. neared complete autonomy.² However, he does not continue and draw out the dialectical nature of the relation.

¹Ibid., p.85.

²An historical example of the dialectical relation between autonomy and heteronomy might be the development of the demagogues from the Sophists. The Sophists took the existing autonomy (Parmenides) to the extreme where it ceased to be autonomy in Tillich's sense and became self-law, (Man is the measure). Out of Sophists' schools arose the demagogues (c. 425 B.C.) who were demonic in their rejection of the logos structure of reason.

The Cognitive Function of Reason and the Quest for Revelation

In the above discussion of reason, emphasis was placed on the distortion and self-contradiction of reason under the conditions of existence. Emphasis has not been given to the ontological meaning of knowledge, i.e. to the structures of being which are involved in the pursuit of knowledge and to the way they are involved. Since Tillich defines revelation as "the manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge,"¹ he now discusses the ontological structure of cognitive reason implied in the analysis of the self-contradiction of actual reason.

"Knowledge is a form of union,"² a unique type of union which requires detachment. In order to know, "the gap between subject and object"³ must be overcome. Yet, in order to know, "one must 'look'⁴ at the thing, and in order to 'look' at a thing, one must be 'at a distance.'"⁵ According to Tillich, the problem of epistemology, the ontology of knowing, is the explanation and attainment of the "unity of detachment and union"⁶ in knowledge.

That knowledge is a unity of detachment and unity is confirmed in life. Ignorance is separation; this fact is true for societies and it is true for knowledge. We are

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.94.

²Ibid., p.94. ³Ibid., p.94. ⁴Ibid., p.94.

⁵Ibid., p.94. ⁶Ibid., p.94.

ignorant of that from which we are separated and we are separated from that about which we are ignorant. Tillich terms the separation of ignorance (the awareness of) a "vacuum". The passion to know for the sake of knowing is, writes Tillich, a sign of the vacuum and a striving for the reunion which will fill the vacuum.

The union of knowledge does more than just fill the vacuum; "it also transforms and heals."¹ It was this transforming and healing quality of knowledge which, according to Tillich, was recognized by Socrates "when he made the assertion that out of the knowing of the good the doing of the good follows."² Tillich charges that attempts to belittle Socrates' discovery by stating that many people do what they know to be wrong is "as easy as it is cheap."³ It fails to recognize the true import of Socrates' statement which is that "true knowledge includes union and, therefore an openness to receive that with which one unites."⁴ Tillich further asserts that Paul's understanding of knowledge agrees with Socrates and that gnosis in the New Testament includes "cognitive, sexual, and mystical union at the same time."⁵ "He who knows God or the Christ in the sense of being grasped by him and being united with him does the good."⁶

¹Ibid., p.95.

⁴Ibid., p.95.

²Ibid., p.95.

⁵Ibid., p.96.

³Ibid., p.95.

⁶Ibid., p.96.

For Tillich, "God" is a symbol for the ground of being in which all being participates. Hence, it is understandable that he would view knowledge of God as involving a type of union. But in attributing the same view to Paul, Tillich is incorrect. Paul was a Jew and, therefore aware of a great distance between God and himself. There are no passages in Paul's writings where knowledge of God implies union;¹ this would be unthinkable to Paul. In a sense, Paul can live in Christ; in a sense, knowledge and ~~faith~~ involve being en christo (II Cor. 5:17).² But in neither case is there mystical union.

As important as union is to knowledge, union without detachment cannot give knowledge. Cognitive detachment is necessary in all acts of knowledge. Man must be able to look at that with which he is existentially united in knowledge, but under the conditions of existence reason cannot attain the unity of cognitive detachment and existential union.

Knowledge which is determined by the element of detachment

¹In Paul's writings en theou never occurs in the context of man's knowledge of God.

²Jesus Christ is he who teaches us about the Kingdom, calls us to it, and reveals God to us. We know the Kingdom because of him, through him. We see it "through his eyes", "through his faith". We live in him in that we live in his faith. Paul lives in Christ, in Christ's faith, trust.

is termed "controlling knowledge."¹ The goal of controlling knowledge is the union of subject and object so that the subject can control the object. The drive to control transforms the known into a thing for things are controllable. "Man resists objectification."² Knowledge of man must involve union which does not seek control; to control a man as a thing is to destroy him as a person.

In true knowledge about man, the emotional element of union is primary and the element of detachment is secondary. Tillich concedes that controlling knowledge does have a place in knowing about man, e.g. man's "bodily, psychic, and mental constitution",³ but adds that knowledge of human nature, of man as a person requires the element of union. Tillich terms this type of knowledge "receiving knowledge." The emotional element in receiving knowledge does not exclude rational content.

Man seeks knowledge to gain truth. "Since theology claims to be true, it must discuss the meaning of the term "truth"⁴ and the relation between revealed truth and other forms of truth. The claim of truth is a claim about reality. Therefore, the question about the nature of reality must be raised.

¹Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.97.

²Ibid., p.98. ³Ibid., p.98. ⁴Ibid., p.100.

What is it about reality which can allow attempts to grasp it fail? One answer is the self-contradiction of actual reason but this answers the question from the side of the perceiving subject only. "The reason is that things hide their true being."¹ Since reality is not static but dialectical, reality can be grasped only through the dialectic. Tillich's discussion here is again overly brief. From "Kairos and Logos" however, it is possible to follow his thought.

Dialectics is the observation of the essence, of reality itself (the form or idea). The idea is not at rest, but in relation to itself. The attempt to grasp reality which does not recognize the dialectical nature of the idea will fail to grasp the "really" real.

How can man know he has grasped reality? According to Tillich, there are two ways in which the truth of a judgment may be verified: experimentation and experience. The former is the method of controlling knowledge, the latter of receiving knowledge. Experimentation yields repeatable precision, but it can do so only through an attitude of detachment. Hence, experiment gains accuracy at the cost of significance. Experiences "of a non-experimental character"² cannot be precise, neither can they be repeated. Despite its lack of precision

¹Ibid., p.101.

²Ibid., p.102.

man continues to use experiential knowledge because it grows out of life; it has significance.

Reason can gain certainty or significance, but not both. The realization of reason's inability to gain both certainty and significance leads either to "a complete resignation of truth or to a quest for revelation for revelation claims to give a truth which is both certain and of ultimate concern -- a truth which includes and accepts the risk and uncertainty of every significant cognitive act, yet transcends it in accepting it."¹

Tillich's analysis of reason in the first half of the method of correlation has uncovered two factors which prevent man from gaining the truth for which he seeks, failure to recognize the dynamic element in reality, its dialectical nature, and the self-contradiction of actual reason under the conditions of existence (in sin). The former can be remedied by using the dialectical approach, following the movement of reality "through yes and no."²

As seen in the analysis, the distortion of actual reason cannot be solved by reason itself. In the terms of "Kairos and Logos", as long as man is separated from God, he remains in a sphere of cleavage. The self-contradiction of reason under sin can be healed only by a manifestation of the ground of being which is its unity.

¹Ibid., p.105.

²Ibid., p.101.

III.

TILLICH'S DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

In the first half of the method of correlation, the analysis of reason, Tillich concluded that reason is driven to search for a revelation. In the second half of the method of correlation, theology's answer to the questions raised by the situation, Tillich must show how revelation, the revelation of Jesus as the Christ, solves the self-contradiction of actual reason. The second half of the method of correlation is the doctrine of revelation.

The Meaning of Revelation

Tillich begins his discussion of revelation with a phenomenological¹ description of revelation. He chooses this approach because phenomenology requires all studies to define their concepts clearly and to describe what is meant by them.

In the realm of "spiritual realities like religion,"² a critical element must be added to the phenomenological approach so judgments between contradictory examples of revelation can be made. A criterion is required. The criterion against

¹Phenomenology is an approach to reality aimed at getting to the "things in themselves," devised by Edmund Husserl.

²Tillich, Paul, Systematic Theology Vol. I, p.107.

which other examples of revelation are to be (critically) compared is received through a revelation which has been accepted as final, i.e. universally valid.

The revelation taken as the criterion must be both concrete and universal. If the criterion is not universal, it will exclude some examples of revelation from the discussion improperly; if it is not concrete, the criterion will become a mere abstraction without ultimate significance. Only if a particular, concrete revelation is accepted as universally valid can a criterion which will yield a valid description of revelation for "every revelation, however imperfect and distorted the revelatory event actually may be."¹ According to Tillich, "the reception of Jesus as the Christ by Peter"² is an example of final revelation, of that manifestation of the ground of being in the light of which all other manifestations are to be judged. Using this example as the criterion of revelation, Tillich elaborates three marks of revelation.

The first distinguishing mark of revelation is that of mystery. Tillich develops the relation between revelation and mystery through an etymological study of the two words. Revelation means "removing the veil";³ mystery comes from

¹Ibid., p.108.

²Ibid., p.107-8.

³Ibid., p.108.

muein, "closing the eyes or closing the mouth."¹ Revelation uncovers that which is unknown and which cannot be known through the ordinary channels of knowing. Ordinary knowledge employs a subject-object scheme in which the subject views the object and grasps it.

Mystery transcends the subject-object scheme of ordinary language (the eyes are closed). Since our language reflects the subject-object scheme, a mystery cannot be fully expressed in ordinary language. Transcending the limits of ordinary knowledge and ordinary language, mystery remains forever mysterious and ineffable even for those (people) who have experienced it. Hence, the revelation of a mystery does not add to our knowledge. (The reception of a mystery does not add to our knowledge.) The reception of a mystery through revelation does include two cognitive elements, its reality and a relationship with its reality.²

Mystery involves both a negative and a positive side. The negative aspect of mystery occurs when reason moves beyond itself to the very depth of reason, to the deeper stratum upon which reason rests, to its "ground and abyss."³ Reason so driven is thrown back on itself in the face of the abyss

¹Ibid., p.108.

²As implied here, there is no revelation without its reception.

³Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.110.

of being and its own finitude. "The 'stigma' of finitude"¹ manifests itself in the analysis of reason as well as in revelation.

The positive aspect of mystery, subsuming the negative aspect, appears only in an actual revelation. The positive side reveals the abyss to be the ground of being as well, the power of being. Revealing man's ultimate concern, the positive side manifests the healing power of being-itself which overcomes the threat of non-being.

The second distinguishing mark of revelation is that of ecstacy. When the mind is grasped by the revelation of mystery, the mind transcends itself. Reason stands outside itself; it is ecstatic. The reception of a mystery involves the shock of non-being in the presence of the divine abyss, but at the same moment it lifts reason above itself in the presence of the divine ground.

The third distinguishing mark of revelation is that of miracle. Because of the association of "miracle" with gross and wonderful contradictions of the law of nature, Tillich suggests the term "sign-events"² to cover the original meaning of miracle, "that which produces astonishment."³ As in the case of mystery and ecstacy, sign-events do not

¹Ibid., p.110.

²Ibid., p.115.

³Ibid., p.115.

destroy reason, but lift reason above itself. The astonishing manifestation of being-itself grasps reason, throws it back on its finitude (on its possibility of non-being), and reveals the depth and ground of being.

Since everything participates in being, any thing can become the medium for the manifestation of being. What Tillich means by this is that there is no thing which is a priori excluded from being that which, in a special circumstance, drives reason beyond itself to its ground. This explains for Tillich why nearly every thing (rocks, oceans, people, storms, etc.) has been a medium of revelation in the course of human history and anthropology. Although every thing can be the medium of revelation, "no person and nothing is worthy to represent our ultimate concern,"¹ i.e. no finite is worthy to manifest the infinite.

Here, as throughout the Systematics, Tillich is attempting a translation of the traditional language of theology into a language more understandable by the educated, contemporary man. The question which must be raised is, is his translation accurate. Does his translation allow for the freedom and sovereignty of God² or does it make revelation part of the "nature of things?" In the Old Testament, God's self-disclosure

¹Ibid., p.118.

²It is my opinion that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is the central theological doctrine.

involves numerous natural elements (storms, the burning bush); but these elements are revelatory because God chooses to reveal himself through them. Although a complete discussion of the relation between Tillich's doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of the sovereignty of God must wait until the evaluation, it can be indicated that what drives reason beyond itself, what makes the medium of revelation revelatory will be the key to the question raised above.

While nothing is a priori excluded from being the medium of revelation, the different qualities resident in various things qualifies the kind of revelatory experience in which they can participate. That is, a mountain or large rock may reveal "the power of enduring"¹ and a storm may reveal the awesome, active power of being-itself, but they are both limited in the number of qualities of being to which they can point by their own "limited number of qualities."² To this extent, the medium of revelation affects (qualifies) that which it manifests.

"Revelation through natural mediums is not natural revelation."³ According to Tillich, what is usually (and improperly) called "natural revelation is the negative side of mystery

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.118.

²Ibid., p.118.

³Ibid., p.119.

which does appear in all reason. "Historical revelation"¹ is another unfortunate term which confuses revelation through history with revelation in history. The manifestation of being-itself is done through mediums, persons and things, which are in history. History is revelatory only in the sense that significant events in history are accepted as revelatory.

Having discussed the marks and mediums of revelation, Tillich then distinguishes between original and dependent revelation. "An original revelation is a revelation which occurs in a constellation that did not exist before."² In original revelation a new sign-event manifesting the divine ground comes together with the reception of it. As an example, Tillich uses Peter's reception of Jesus as the Christ.

In a dependent revelation, a new reception of the original revelation enters into the matrix of original event and original reception in a manner which is dependent upon the original reception. The manifestation of the divine through mediums which are in history can be received only by people who witness the event, who are contemporaneous with the event. Succeeding generations can accept the sign-event only because the event was originally received as a sign-event.

¹Ibid., p.120.

²Ibid., p.126.

Since the medium of revelation does qualify the revelation and since the original reception of the sign-event is a medium through which subsequent receptions of the event (dependent revelation) is made possible, subsequent receptions cannot stand in the same relation to the original event as did the original reception. Thus, Tillich writes that "following generations met the Jesus who had been received as the Christ by Peter and by the other apostles."¹

Because revelation requires both sign-event and reception, a sign-event which is not received is no revelation. In this connection Tillich writes that "Jesus is the Christ, both because he could become the Christ and because he was received as the Christ."² The Christ is the "Logos become flesh." For Tillich, the Logos is the "principle of divine self-revelation."³ What does Tillich mean when he writes "Jesus is the Christ ... because he was received as the Christ."⁴

While it is true that the appearance of the Logos become flesh would not have been revelatory if he had not been received as such, would he then have ceased to be or failed to become the Logos become flesh? Does Tillich mean that Jesus' being the Christ was dependent upon his reception as

¹Ibid., p.126.

³Ibid., p.16.

²Ibid., p.126.

⁴Ibid., p.126.

such? Or is Tillich affirming that the Logos (become flesh) would reveal himself as such? As the "principle of divine self-revelation", the function of the Logos is revelatory. Jesus is the Christ for man, the man for man, and hence, reveals himself as such.

Actual Revelation

In the preceding sections on revelation reported above, Tillich's development of the meaning of revelation dealt with revelation in general seen in the light of the revelation of Jesus as the Christ. He now turns to a (dogmatic)¹ discussion of the revelation of Jesus as the Christ and to what makes this revelation the final revelation. As noted earlier in the presentation, the final revelation must be both concrete and universally valid.

All actual revelation (revelation received as such) is final "for the person who is grasped by a revelatory experience believes it to be the truth concerning the mystery of being and his relation to it."² To look for another revelation is to deny the truth of the first revelation. For the Christian, the revelation of Jesus as the Christ is the final revelation and all other revelations are dependent upon it.

¹Ibid., p.132. By dogmatic, Tillich means "in the genuine sense of dogma as the doctrinal basis of a ... religious community."

²Ibid., p.132.

What is it about this particular revelation which makes it that one upon which all others are dependent and by which all others are judged?

In the section on the mediums of revelation it was noted that the medium qualifies the revelation to a greater or lesser degree by its own nature. The greater the degree of influence by the medium the more the revelation is hidden under the (potentially) idolatrous claim of the medium to be that which it manifests. The final revelation must be that revelation in which the medium does not condition the revelation, but sacrifices itself to the revelation completely, becoming utterly transparent. Tillich writes, "revelation is final if it has the power of negating itself without losing itself."¹

Jesus sacrifices himself, becoming "transparent to the mystery he reveals."² Jesus can surrender himself completely because he knows himself completely, "because he possesses himself completely."³ "And only he can possess -- and therefore surrender -- himself completely who is united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption."⁴ Jesus was "united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption."⁵

¹Ibid., p.133.

⁴Ibid., p.133.

²Ibid., p.133.

⁵Ibid., p.133.

³Ibid., p.133.

In the light of this statement, it is surprising to read Tillich's statement, "Jesus became the Christ by conquering the demonic forces which tried to make him demonic by tempting him to claim ultimacy for his finite nature."¹ In other words, Jesus became the Christ by refusing to claim anything for himself as the medium of revelation. Once again the use of the word "became" is the critical question.

If Jesus is "united with the ground of his being and meaning without separation and disruption,"² what does it mean to say that Jesus became the Christ in the Temptation? In the Temptation Jesus affirms who he is and what he must do for us. Jesus becomes the Christ for us. For Tillich, who consistently sees the revelation of Jesus as the Christ in terms of the healing power it has for man, "became" must mean, "became for us."

The New Testament witness to Jesus as the Christ is one in its claim that Jesus possessed unbroken unity with the ground of being throughout his life and that he continually sacrificed "everything he could have gained for himself from this unity."³ On the cross he perfectly surrendered even what had "impressed itself on his followers as messianic in power and significance."⁴ In this act, Jesus becomes

¹Ibid., p.133.

³Ibid., p.135.

²Ibid., p.133.

⁴Ibid., p.134.

completely transparent to the ground of being refusing to use his unity with the ground of being for himself; he expresses "the New Being which is his being."¹

Revelation is a "correlation of ecstasy and miracle."² Jesus "is the miracle of the final revelation;"³ his complete self-surrender is "astonishing." The reception of Jesus as the miracle "is the ecstasy of the final revelation;"⁴ it drives Peter to his confession, it calls the church to be the church. Thus, writes Tillich, Christ and the Church "belong to each other."⁵

No revelation, not even the final revelation, occurs in a vacuum. The final revelation occurred in a matrix prepared for it by a history of revelations which made man ready to receive it. Even though the earlier revelations became distorted by the idolatrous claims of the mediums, they awakened man to an expectation. Tillich terms the preparatory series of revelations and the reception of the final revelation, "the history of revelation."⁶

The history of revelation is not the compilation of all known revelatory events, for such an approach would require a detachment which destroys the revelatory nature of the events, but history seen in the light of the final revelation.⁷

¹Ibid., p.136.

²Ibid., p.136.

³Ibid., p.136.

⁴Ibid., p.136.

⁵Ibid., p.137.

⁶Ibid., p.137.

⁷Ibid., p.138.

Paul's Epistle to the Romans, where Paul explains history in the light of Jesus Christ (9-11), is an example of the history of revelation.

"The revelation which occurs in the period of preparation is universal."¹ Clarifying his use of "universal", Tillich explains that "universal" does not mean "general." Revelation occurs in specific events; it does not occur generally. Second, "universal" does not mean "natural" for, as noted earlier, revelation through natural elements is not "natural revelation." Revelation is never natural; it is always extraordinary. Finally, universal revelation does not mean that revelation is always taking place everywhere. What Tillich does mean by "universal" is apparently that the "fulness of time" applies to all men not just the Jews. Revelations prepare all men for the final revelation, Greeks as well as Jews.

The history of revelation involves conservatism, criticism, and anticipation. Because the divine has been experienced through it, the medium of revelation becomes a sacramental object. The role of the priest is to conserve the power of the sacramental object by introducing new persons into the revelatory event (dependent revelation). In this act of conservation, however, the medium becomes the object of worship itself, thereby clouding its transparent function and

¹Ibid., p.138.

threatening the real reason for its original conservation.

Three forms of criticism have historically opposed the false elevation of the medium by the priests. They are mysticism, reason, and prophetism. Mysticism attacks the conservative-priestly function itself by denying any importance to the concrete side of revelation and by seeking "to unite the soul directly with the ground of being."¹ In its reaction against the demonic claims made for the medium, mysticism rejects the importance of the medium altogether, threatening the very nature of revelation.

Although "reason is not revelatory",² reason does have a right to criticize the distortion of a revelation. In the section on reason, Tillich affirmed that the "real is rational", that being is open to a rational approach, that being is not absurd. Because revelation reveals the ground of being for human knowledge, it is not irrational. If the elevation of a medium of revelation to a demonic object contradicts reason, reason must object.

The third criticism of the improper elevation of the medium of revelation by the priests is leveled by prophetism.³ In attacking the improper elevation of the medium, the prophetic

¹Ibid., p.140.

²Ibid., p.140.

³By prophets, Tillich does not mean Israelite prophets only, but the prophetic spirit found in all religions, Ibid., p.141.

movement does not devalue the importance of the medium as does mysticism. Prophetism does not deny the sacramental character of the medium; it attacks only the attempt to idolatrize the medium. Judging revelation, sacramental objects, and the priestly cult by God's law and calling all people to an obedience of God's law, prophetism promises a future fulfillment.¹ Anticipating the future, as well as criticizing, prophetism performs the decisive² role in the period of preparation for the final revelation. It opens man to the future; it awakens him for the final revelation.

For those people who have received the final revelation as such (the Church), the period after the final revelation is a period of "receiving revelation."³ Those people who have not received the final revelation remain in the period of preparation. The reception of final revelation is not the end of revelation; the Church continues to receive revelations for "the presence of the divine Spirit in the Church is revelatory."⁴ This revelation is dependent upon the reception of Jesus as the Christ because "the Spirit through whom the revelation occurs is always the Spirit of Jesus as the Christ."⁵

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.142.

²Ibid., p.141.

⁴Ibid., p.144.

³Ibid., pp.143-4.

⁵Ibid., p.144.

"The history of revelation and the history of salvation are the same history."¹ As the manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge, revelation heals reason. With the reception of the miracle comes salvation; the receiver is made healthy, whole. Salvation and revelation are both rooted in miracle (the sign-event) and ecstasy (the reception of the sign-event). Salvation's foundation in the event of Jesus as the Christ is established in truth and certainty. Its reception by "man living under the conditions of existence is always fragmentary."²

"Revelation and salvation are final, complete, and unchangeable with respect to the revealing and saving event; they are preliminary, fragmentary, and changeable with respect to the persons who receive revelatory truth and saving power."³

Reason in Final Revelation

If systematic theology is to be an answering theology it must show in its epistemological section how revelation answers the "questions implied in the existential conflicts of reason."⁴ Systematic theology cannot prove its answers for it cannot prove Jesus is the Christ; proof requires detachment while recognition of Jesus as the Christ requires involvement. But systematic theology can show that if its

¹Ibid., p.144.

³Ibid., p.146.

²Ibid., p.146.

⁴Ibid., p.147.

claim that Jesus is the Christ is accepted, then its message does answer the "questions implied in the existential conflicts of reason."¹

In the analysis of reason under the conditions of existence, it was seen that reason was torn by a conflict between autonomy and heteronomy.² In actualizing the structure of reason in obedience to "the law of subjective-objective reason,"³ autonomy loses its depth. To be whole, autonomy must be united with its depth. Heteronomy, reacting against autonomy, disregards the structures of reason in claiming to speak in the name of the ground of being. Heteronomy makes this claim for itself; it becomes demonic. To be whole, the depth of reason must surrender its idolatrous claims.

The revelation of Jesus as the Christ (the "final" revelation) heals reason by creating a new theonomy, by uniting autonomy with its own depth. As the medium of final revelation, Jesus, as noted earlier, became completely transparent to the mystery he revealed, surrendering all claims he could have made for himself. That he did become completely transparent to the ground of being means for Tillich a "dimension of depth"⁴ is given "to all forms of rational creativity."⁵ That he sacrificed himself completely to the

¹Ibid., p.147.

⁴Ibid., p.147.

²Ibid., pp.83-86.

⁵Ibid., p.147.

³Ibid., p.84.

content of revelations "keeps heteronomous reason from establishing itself against rational autonomy."¹ Revelation resolves the struggle between autonomy and heteronomy by uniting autonomy with its true depth and by abolishing the false claim of heteronomy.

This theonomy is realized where the final revelation of Jesus as the Christ is accepted, in the Church "as the community of the New Being."² From the Church, the new theonomy "pours into the whole of man's cultural life and gives a Spiritual center to man's spiritual life."³ But the Church is also a community of people "immersed in the conflicts of existence"⁴ and as such it is always open to the temptation of countering criticisms with heteronomous claims. If the Church as a community of people is to remain the community of the New Being she must continually affirm the ever present theonomous forces in her.

The second conflict within actual reason discussed by Tillich was that between absolutism and relativism. The two attempts by reason to solve this struggle, criticism and pragmatism (which developed from positivism), cannot succeed. Criticism deprives the static element of reason of its content.⁵ It is not concrete. Pragmatism, "with its emphasis

¹ Ibid., p.148.

⁴ Ibid., p.148.

² Ibid., p.148.

⁵ Ibid., p.88.

³ Ibid., p.148.

on complete openness for everything, deceives itself about its assumed lack of absolutistic elements."¹ Because of this deception, pragmatism cannot solve the conflict; it is concrete but not absolute. The conflict can be solved only by that which is both concrete and absolute.

As the medium of final revelation, Jesus became completely transparent to the divine ground, to that which is the absolutely absolute and the source of all that is. That which is revealed in Jesus as the Christ is revealed through a particular human life.

"In the New Being Which is manifest in Jesus as the Christ, the most concrete of all possible forms of concreteness, a personal life, is the bearer of that which is absolute without condition and restriction."²

This is the meaning of the Christian paradox of Jesus as the Christ, which Tillich further explains as "the appearance of that which conquers existence under the conditions of existence."³ He is the appearance of the infinite within the finite, of the absolute within the concrete.

The Church must hold this paradox in tension. In Jesus as the Christ the unconditional and the conditioned meet. In so far as the Unconditional is manifested in Jesus as the Christ, it is present in him. In so far as he surrendered

¹ Ibid., p.150.

² Ibid., p.150.

³ Ibid., p.57.

himself to the Unconditional the conditioned is present in him. If the Church emphasizes the Unconditional at the expense of the conditioned or the conditioned at the expense of the Unconditional, the paradox is distorted.¹ For Tillich this means that the Church can neither promulgate absolute laws based on Jesus nor relegate him to the position "of a religious founder, conditioned by the situation of his time and by the structure of his personality"²

In holding only to the paradox of Jesus as the Christ, the Church is not deprived of all absolute laws for there is one law which "is not denied in the act of self-sacrifice but rather fulfilled,"³ the law of love. Love is absolute and static in that it is always love and never hate. "But love is always dependent on that which is loved and therefore it is unable to force finite elements on finite existence in the name of an assumed absolute."⁴ By this statement, Tillich means love is dependent upon its object for the form it will take, the way it will be expressed, not whether it will be expressed. In this sense love is relative for the concrete form it will take depends on the situation. The law of love, manifested in Jesus as the Christ, is both concrete and absolute.

¹The terms "Unconditional" and "conditioned" explain Tillich's meaning. Although he does not employ them here, he does in "Kairos and Logos."

²Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.149.

³Ibid., p.150.

⁴Ibid., p.152.

"Final revelation does not destroy reason; it fulfills reason."¹ The revelation of Jesus as the Christ, being both absolute and concrete, overcomes the struggle between the static and dynamic elements of reason by uniting them. Reason is expressed in decision. Obedience to the law of love gives reason the courage to decide (to act) without claiming an absolute knowledge, yet without courting scepticism.

The third conflict within actual reason discussed by Tillich was that between formalism and emotionalism. Seeking knowledge for the purpose of controlling the object, formalism avoids what can be sought but not grasped. Formalism divides the cognitive functions of reason into discrete acts, excluding emotion (it cannot be grasped)² and disregarding the interdependence of cognitive actions created by emotion.³ The reaction of emotion against formalism is "futile because it is merely 'emotional', that is, minus structural elements."⁴ According to Tillich's analysis then, formalism is without content; emotion, without structure. Form and content must be united.

Revelation heals the conflict between formalism and

¹Ibid., p.150.

²An example of formalism is logical positivism which would divide all language into two categories, analytic and emotion.

³By "emotion", I mean that which gives cognitive activity its content, its passion, its *raison d'être*. I believe this is the meaning Tillich intends for "emotion", when it is united with the structural elements, p.25 and 90.

⁴Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.93.

emotion because the reception of the sign-event involves the whole person. The manifestation of being-itself does not destroy the structures of reason for being is what under-girds the structures of reason. Emotion is also caught up in the revelation for revelation manifests man's ultimate concern, being. Thus, Tillich writes, "The ultimate concern about the final revelation is as radically rational as it is radically emotional, and neither side can be eliminated without destructive consequences."¹ Form and emotion are united in revelation because being-itself is what both seek.

With his discussion of reason in final revelation, Tillich has completed the method of correlation in the epistemological section of his theology. The questions raised by an analysis of the situation have been answered by the answers implied by the Christian message.

Reason under the conditions of existence is fragmented and distorted; it is in a sphere of cleavage and self-contradiction. Reason does not completely lose its depth (that which participates in being) for if it did, reason would cease to be. Reality would be destroyed. Within the self-contradiction of actual reason, the depth of reason points to being-itself through myths, leading reason to seek revelation that that which is faintly pointed to might become clear.

¹Ibid., p.154.

Revelation, as "the manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge."¹ reveals the depth which unites reason with being, thereby healing reason. In the final revelation of Jesus as the Christ, "Jesus of Nazareth is sacrificed to Jesus as the Christ "² so completely that the medium of revelation does not qualify the manifestation but allows it to shine through fully and perfectly. The reception of Jesus as the Christ is the reception of the healing manifestation of the ground of being. In the decision of reception, reason is united with its true ground. That which is fragmentary is united, that which is distorted is made clear, and that which is split is made whole.

¹Ibid., p.94.

²Ibid., p.135.

EVALUATION

Tillich's work is one of great brilliance; his analysis of reason reflects the great power of his thought and his analysis of revelation reflects the clarity of his insight. In attempting to evaluate the epistemological section of the Systematics, there are many things which could be said; many things, indeed which should be said. His work deserves far more credit than I can give it. However, because of the limited scope of this study, I shall restrict my evaluation to a few remarks which indicate my own ideas which have arisen in response to Tillich's work.

Tillich's Systematics is an attempt to translate the Christian message for the present generation, "to speak understandably to the large group of educated people, including open-minded students of theology, for whom traditional language has become irrelevant."¹ He is aware that such an attempt risks the loss of the "substance of the Christian message";² but he is also convinced that the risk must be faced.

For taking this risk, Tillich has been criticized and accused of not being a Christian. Such attacks are petty and unfounded in themselves. God is the God of all men,

¹ Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p.5.

² Ibid., p.5.

not just those men who speak Hebrew and Greek. To spread the Christian message we do not need to employ Biblical language and concepts exclusively. The Christian gospel is not restricted to one Weltanschauung. Tillich has undertaken his task humbly, remaining open to fair criticism. For attempting this task and accepting this risk, he deserves our praise, our admiration and our prayers.

Before proceeding with an evaluation of Tillich, it is necessary that I spell out my criterion for the evaluation: God is sovereign; He is Lord. His creation of all that is (of all that is not God) and His sustaining of His creation are manifestations of His sovereignty, of His power and authority. His creation is an expression of love, true; but His love is an expression of His own pleasure as Lord. As the Lord, God reveals Himself; and He reveals Himself to be the Lord. Who can read the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, without being aware of God's transcendence and hiddenness? The infinite qualitative difference between God and man is spanned only by God in His grace.

God's sovereignty is manifested in His creation; it is fully and perfectly manifested in Jesus the Christ who, as the Elect of God reveals His sovereignty, announces the coming time when God's reign will be fully revealed to all men, calls men to repentance, and perfectly subjects himself

to God's rule. In this sense, Jesus the Christ is unconditional and the conditioned.

The Church, as those who have accepted Jesus as the Christ are his. The Church is his Church; its faith is his faith. Theology as a function of the Church serves him. The question which must be put to theology is, as Barth writes: "Does it conform to Him?"¹

In attempting to speak to the present generation, Tillich has used an answering theology which correlates the questions implied in an analysis of man's situation with the answers implied in the Christian message. He (ostensibly) starts with man as man in his situation and moves to God. Despite the brilliance of his attempt, it is questionable whether such an attempt is possible. Tillich himself has written that theology is circular and that it requires a commitment. This commitment is to God's revelation of Himself in Jesus the Christ. How then, can Tillich begin his Systematics with man? Can one who already has faith in Jesus as the Christ analyze man, man's situation, except in the light of God's self-disclosure in Jesus the Christ? What does it mean to say that man asks his questions under the impact of God's

¹Barth, Karl, Church Dogmatics Vol. I, 1, p.3. Tillich agrees with this when he writes, "The third and most significant element in systematic theology is the dogmatic element." (Vol. I, p.31-2)

answer¹ except that under the impact of God's answer in Jesus the Christ, man sees his situation for what it really is and now knows what he really needs.

According to Tillich, the depth of reason, that which undergirds reason itself, participates in being-itself. As noted earlier, the depth of reason, though hidden by the conditions of existence, is not lost. Faintly pointing to being-itself, through myths and cults,² the depth of reason leads reason "to raise the question of revelation,"³ to seek revelation.

Although "no person and no thing is worthy in itself to represent our ultimate concern"⁴ (the finite cannot represent the infinite), because "every person and everything participates in being-itself"⁵ (our infinite, ultimate concern), in the ground of being, nothing is a priori excluded from being revelatory. Because everything participates in the ground of being, anything can (not will, but could) become revelatory. Persons, things, events in history are all revelatory when they manifest being-itself for human knowledge. Reason both recoils in the face of the abyss of being itself and its own finitude and is lifted up above its finitude by being-itself which is ground as well as abyss.

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.61.

²Ibid., p.80.

³Ibid., p.81.

⁴Ibid., p.118.

⁵Ibid., p.118.

In the final revelation of Jesus as the Christ the manifestation of the ground of being is full and perfect, thereby healing the conflicts within actual reason.

There are two questions which must be addressed to Tillich's analysis. First, can reason ask for revelation? In the presentation of Tillich's analysis of reason, I noted that the "depth of reason" of the Systematics was very similar in function and content to "the structure of personality" in "Kairos and Logos." According to Tillich, the structure of personality is not destroyed by any decision it makes. That is, man does not cease to be a historical person because of any decision he makes. Even in sin, man continues to be a creature; in Tillich's terms, even under the conditions of existence, the depth of reason is not lost.

But, does man know himself to be a creature except as God addresses him as such? Is asking for a revelation, "for a manifestation of the ground of being for human knowledge,"¹ not the equivalent of knowledge of God already? Tillich argues that reason can ask the question of God. If man can raise the question of God before God reveals Himself, then in what sense does man need a revelation? If God can be known before He reveals Himself, to what do the transcendence and sovereignty of God point? It appears to me that Tillich's

¹Ibid., p.94.

analysis of reason, does permit a type of natural knowledge of God and that natural knowledge of God infringes upon God's freedom to reveal Himself to whomever he pleases.

The Biblical witness is clear in its assertion that man knows God because God in His grace reveals Himself to man. God can "turn His face" from His creatures; He can withdraw. He is free to be where He wills and to reveal Himself to whomever He chooses.

It can be argued that man is aware that something is wrong with his life and that this awareness leads him to seek the answer and meaning to life. Even if this is granted, it does not mean that man knows of God or that he can ask God for a revelation. The awareness could tell man only that he is finite, distorted, and in need of help. So with reason. Tillich's analysis of reason is excellent, but does the fact that reason knows itself to be distorted mean reason can ask for a revelation? I think not.

Second, what makes a person or event revelatory? This question was raised in the presentation of Tillich's discussion of the mediums of revelation in a preliminary way. What is there about a person or an event that it drives reason beyond itself to its very depth? Is there something about the medium or the receiver or both which causes the ontological shock?

It is difficult to see just what revelation is for Tillich. If everything participates in being-itself, and if revelation is the manifestation of being-itself, then revelation is the manifestation of what we essentially already are, of something we already participate in. In what way is revelation revelatory since the depth of reason already points to being-itself? Does God choose to reveal Himself? Or, is revelation part of the nature of things? Is revelation the clear insight into what we essentially are which comes in moments of extraordinary spiritual awareness evoked by unusual events?

Tillich does not clearly answer these questions. He does write that the ground of being "oscillates between cause and substance and transcends both of them."¹ For Tillich, this means that the ground of being is neither the cause nor the substance but "the mystery which appears in revelation."² It is, then, difficult to see whether Tillich is in any essential agreement with the Biblical witness to the God Who is sovereign and Who as sovereign chooses to reveal Himself through numerous mediums.³

¹Ibid., p.156.

²Ibid., p.156.

³It would appear that as long as the discussion of revelation is explicitly symbolic, Tillich would argue that terms like "cause" are necessary. However, it does not employ any terms which could reflect the sovereign rule and pleasure of God.

In trying to reach the educated man of today, Tillich appears to have been overly protective of man's role in God's enterprise. He has avoided doctrines which might be interpreted as infringing upon man's freedom even at the cost of abridging God's freedom. In this connection he writes, "God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestation."¹

The question of man's freedom is always a vexing one for it so often pits the creature against the Creator. As a question about the relation of creature to Creator, it is very crucial. However, the question must be put in its proper perspective. The God who creates is the God who sustains His creation and His sustaining of His creation is as much a manifestation of His sovereignty as His original creation. The question of man's freedom, as important as it is, is no more important in any point of history as it is at the moment of creation. In other words, the creature does have some freedom, but his freedom does not and cannot contradict the sovereignty of the Creator who continues to sustain and guide His Creation towards the telos He has chosen for it.

The common element between God and man in Tillich's system which allows his use of the method of correlation is, as I noted in the Introduction, being. God is being-itself,

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p.61.

the ground of being. Man participates in being-itself (if this were to mean only that man is dependent upon being-itself, God, for his being, Tillich would be on surer ground). As I have shown, this fact explains for Tillich how reason can seek revelation, but, as I have tried to show, this explanation has been at the expense of the sovereignty of God. It appears to me that this explanation has cost Tillich the dynamic element of theology.

First, God is not free to choose and reject, to reveal Himself and to hide Himself. Second, because man participates in being-itself, man's salvation is part of the nature of things. The truly dynamic element in salvation and faith is lost. Everything which is, is "rooted in the eternal ground of being,"¹ writes Tillich. Therefore, "non-being cannot prevail against it."² Faith for Tillich is the "state of being grasped by the transcendent unity of unambiguous life." Even the man of faith continues in ambiguous life for he continues to exist. He must, therefore, affirm his faith again and again. In this sense, Tillich's system is dynamic, but it lacks the vitality of the Biblical concept of faith and salvation.

¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. III, p.415.

²Ibid., p.415.

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